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Social Network and Demographic Factors on Quality of Life among Youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality

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Abstract

Quality of life among Nigerian youths has continued to be an issue of concern due to the state of the country's economic situations. Studies have examined quality of life among youths using different factors with varied results. Therefore, this study investigated social network and demographic factors on quality of life among youths in Ibadan, Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted while a simple random sampling method was used to select five Local Government Areas in Ibadan Greater Municipality (IGM). Data were collected from 355 participants using validated scales and analyzed using multiple regression analysis and independent samples t-test statistics. Two hypotheses were tested and accepted at p =.001 level of significance. The result revealed that social networks significantly influence quality of life among youths in IGM [t (353) =5.60, p =.001]. The result further showed that demographic factors of age, gender and educational status jointly predicted quality of life among youths in IGM [R^2 =. 062, F(3, 350) = 4.578, p = .001]. However, it was only educational status that independently predicted quality of life among study participants (β = -234, t= -4.478, p =.001). It is concluded that social networks and demographic factors of educational status are strong contributors to quality of life among youths in IGM. The study recommended that government and other stakeholders should empower youths with skills and career plans to improve their quality of life.

Keywords: Social network, demographic factors, quality of life, youths

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1998) describes quality of life (QoL) as individuals' subjective perception of their overall well-being, taking into consideration the individuals' cultural factors, values, goals, expectations, standards and concerns. In addition, Amao (2014) conceives quality of life as the individuals' subjective judgments of themselves based on their overall assessment of what they hold as important to them at a point in time in their lives. Conclusively, Fakorede et al. (2024) defines quality of life as that which encompasses an individual's emotional, physical, material and social well-being in time and space. Quality of life among Nigerian youths has continued to be an issue of concern due to the state of the country's economic situations. Studies have used different variables to investigate quality of life among the youth population with varied results.

One factor considered in this study as likely to influence quality of life among youths is social network which refers to the articulation of social relationship, ascribed or achieved, among individuals, families, households, friends, villages, and communities (Kawachi & Berkman, 2014). Individuals invest in social networks (relationships) in order to create social capital (Coleman, 1988). Social network is closely related to social capital, where family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and significant others constitute the primary sources of social support (Kawachi & Berkman, 2014). This could be material support (e.g., money), instrumental support (e.g., household help, fixing things, childcare), and emotional support (e.g., comforting) thereby contributing to the quality of life of these individuals including youths (Ahn, 2011; Baxter &Cummins, 2013). Social network is a function of social support which in turns influences quality of life (Berkman & Krishna, 2014).

The Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) has been used to explain the concept of social network. The theory posits that individuals are goal-oriented and that their choice of social interaction is a subjective evaluation of their best interaction mode with others that would maximize their gains from the resources available. Also, social exchange goes with social capital, meaning the more individuals build their social networks, the more they have access to social capital available which in turn affects their quality of life (Kawachi & Berkman, 2014). Tough et al. (2017) found absence of social networks to lead to low quality of life among their study participants.

The second factor considered as likely to predict quality of life among youths is the demographic factors of age, gender and educational status. For example, studies have found age to produce varied results as a predictor of quality of life among different populations and across different samples. For example, Netuveli et al. (2006) found age as a strong predictor of QoL among their study participants. In addition, Boswroth et al. (2000) found

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increased age to lead to decrease in basic physical functioning, better mental health, and more vitality components of quality of life. However, Wiggins et al. (2004) and Fakorede et al. (2024) did not find age as a predictor of QoL among their study participants. Another demographic factor considered as a likely predictor of quality of life is gender which also produced varied results.

For example, Fakorede et al. (2024) found gender as a strong predictor of QoL among their study participants. In addition, Nur et al. (2017) and Roothman et al. (2006)found quality of life to vary with gender where males reported higher quality of life than their female counterparts. However, Wiggins et al. (2004) and Sharman (2014) found no gender differences in QoL among their study participants. Finally, educational status has been found to significantly predict quality of life across different samples and populations. For example, Fakorede et al. (2024) found educational status as a strong predictor of quality of life among frontline officers. However, other studies did not find education status as a predictor of quality of life (Farwa et al., 2019).

Because of the high unemployment levels among youths in Ibadan and Nigeria in general, many youths tend to experience quality of life challenges. Although, studies have investigated quality of life among youths using different predictors, however, studies linking social network and demographic factors to quality of life among youths especially in Ibadan Greater Municipality (IGM) are scarce leaving gaps in knowledge to fill. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of social networks and demographic factors on quality of life among youths in IGM. The research question raised to guide this study was: Would social network and demographic factors of age, gender and educational status influence quality of life among youths in IGM?

The study findings would contribute to the understanding of the influence of social networks and demographic factors on the quality of life among youths in the urban setting of Ibadan. Also, the findings in this study would guide policy makers and other stakeholders to design and implement programs that would empower youths to improve their quality of life.

The study tested two hypotheses:

H1: Social network would significantly influence quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality (IGM).

H2: Demographic factors of age, gender and educational status would jointly and independently predict quality of life among youths in IGM.

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METHODS

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design using validated questionnaires to collect data. The independent variables of the study were social network and demographic factors of gender, age and educational status while the dependent variable was quality of life. The study was conducted in Ibadan Greater Municipality (IGM), Oyo State which comprises 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs) classified into inner and outer cities. The inner city consisted of five LGAs (Ibadan North, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-East and Ibadan South-West) while the outer city comprises six LGAs (Akinyele, Egbeda, Oluyole, Ona-Ara, Iddo and Lagelu).

Descriptive statistics revealed the participants' ages to be between 18 and 30 years (M_{age} = 26.16, SD = 7.5). The gender composition of the participants was 210 (60%) males and 145(40%) females. In terms of participants' age distribution, the result showed that 54 (15%) of the participants were between 18 and 25 years, while 301 (85%) were between 26 and 30 years. Further analysis revealed that 35(10%) of the participants had primary school education, 226(64%) had secondary school education while 94(27%) had tertiary education. Furthermore, the employment categories of the study participants revealed that 101 (29%) were self-employed, 161 (45%) were in private employment, 51(14%) were in public employment, while 42(12%) were unemployed. Finally, the marital status of the participants indicated that 205(58%) were singles (unmarried) while 150(42%) were married.

Two instruments were used for data collection.

Social Network Scale (Blau, 1964) was used to measure participants' social network. It is a 19-item scale anchored on 4-Likert's format with responses ranging from 'often' to 'never'. Sample items include: "Do you have friends on Facebook" and "How often do you chat with friends on social media". The author obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, and in this study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 was obtained.

The second was the Quality of Life Scale (Hyde et al., 2003) was used to assess participants' quality of life. The 12-item scale assesses four dimensions of quality of life: Control, autonomy, self-realization and pleasure. It was presented in a 6-Likert's format ranging from 'none/less than monthly/never' to 'more/daily/always'. Sample items include: "I feel that what happens to me is out of my control" and "I can do the things that I want to do". Authors obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.70, while in the current study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.64 was obtained.

The researchers obtained a letter of introduction from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria for identification. Potential participants were met at different

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locations including cafeteria, recreational centers, shopping malls, business offices, churches and mosques to obtain random samples that reflect the populations of youths in the study communities. Potential participants were briefly discussed with and their consent to participate in the study sought for. They were told that participation was voluntary and that no items would identify them. They were equally told to discontinue at any point they feel uncomfortable without penalty. Those who agreed to participate were given the questionnaires to fill which took less than 12 minutes. A total of 359 questionnaires were distributed and collected on the spot. During data screening and coding, four questionnaires were found to have responses tailored to only one dimension and were removed leaving 355 used for the analysis.

IBM SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Descriptive statistics of frequency distribution, means, standard deviation and variance were used to summarize the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants while inferential statistics of multiple regression and independent samples t-test were used to test the hypothesis at $p < 0.001$ level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis are presented based on the hypotheses tested.

H1: Youths who reported high in social networks would score higher in quality of life than youths who scored low in social networks. The hypothesis was tested using independent samples t-test and the result is presented in Table 1

Table 1. Independent samples t-test of social network on quality of life among study participants

Social Network	N	M	SD	Df	t	p
High	179	36.76	6.18	353	5.60	.000*
Low	176	32.70	7.44			

Dependent variable: Quality of life, *Significant at p = .001

Table 1 presents independent samples t-test of social network on quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality. The results showed that social network significantly influence quality of life among study participants [t (353) =5.60, p =.001] such that participants who scored high in social network scored higher in quality of life (M =36.76, SD = 6.18) compared to participants who score low in social network (M = 32.76, SD = 7.44). Hence, the hypothesis was accepted.

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H2: Demographic factors of gender, age, and educational status would jointly and independently predict quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of socio-demographic variables showing joint and independent predictors of quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality

Variables	β	t-value	p	R	R^2	F	p
Gender	.083	1.951	.113	.248	.062	4.578	.001
Age	.001	.011	.991				
Educational Status	-.234	-4.478	.000*				

Dependent variable: Quality of life, *Significant at p = .001

Table 2 presents results of the multiple regression analysis of demographic factors as predictors of quality of life among youths in IGM. The results revealed that demographic factors of age, gender and educational status jointly predicted quality of life among study participants [R^2 =. 062, F(3, 350) = 4.578, p = .001]. This indicates that gender, age, educational status accounted for about 6.2% variance in quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality. Furthermore, the result showed that educational status independently predicted quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality (β = -234, t= -4.478, p = .001). However, gender (β = .083, t = 1`.951, p = .113) and age (β = .001, t =.011, p = .991) did not independently predict quality of life among study participants. Therefore, the hypothesis was partially supported.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that social networks would significantly influence quality of life among youths in Ibadan Greater Municipality was supported. This means that the size of an extra-familial network, level of support, source of support, age of network and type of support system of youths tend to contribute to their quality of life. This result corroborated that obtained by Berkman and Krishna (2014) who found the need to receive support from their social network to have consequential effects on quality of life among youths. Moreover, the finding is in agreement with Tough et al. (2017) who found absence of social networks to lead to low quality of life among their study participants. Furthermore, this finding supported Blane's (2010) result that social networks knit individuals together including

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youths thus improving their quality of life. Conclusively, Blanchflower and Oswald (2008) found that quality of life is influenced by social network factors .

Finally, the hypothesis that demographic factors of age, gender and educational status would jointly predict quality of life among youths in Ibadan was supported. The interactions of demographic variables have significant effects in the determinations of quality of life among study participants. This supported Blane (2010) finding that demographic factors such as age, gender and educational status are good predictors of quality of life among family and friends including youths. However, only educational status independently predicted quality of life among study participants which corroborated Penedo et al. (2003) finding that educational status significantly predicted quality of life among their study participants. The finding corroborated Fakorede et al. (2024) result that age was not a predictor of QoL among their study participants. Finally, the finding of this study is in line with Wiggins et al. (2004) and Sharman (2014) who found no gender differences in QoL among their study participants. However, Farwa et al. (2019) confirmed that age and gender tend to influence quality of life among varied populations including youths.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of social networks and demographic factors on quality of life among youths in Ibadan. The results empirically confirmed that social network and demographic factors significantly contributed to quality of life among study participants. Surprisingly, only educational qualification was found to independently predict quality of life thus emphasizing its importance in quality of life among study participants.

It is recommended that both government and non-governmental organizations should empower youths through skill acquisition and career development programs to make them self-employed. In addition, counseling and guidance services should be provided to train youths for them to understand their personality traits, resilience and social factors that would better their quality of life.

The study suffered some limitations that need to be addressed in further study. To begin with, data were collected using self-reported questionnaires which were not free of response bias. Further study should incorporate focus group interview and longitudinal studies to triangulate data collected from self-reported questionnaires. In addition, the study was conducted among youths in urban Local Government Areas (LGA) in Oyo State which hinder generalization of study findings. Further study would benefit by including youths in other rural LGAs within the State. Finally, the two independent variables investigated were

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not exhaustive. Further study should include social support, personal skill development and personality traits to determine youths' quality of life.

AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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